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ABSTRACT

A study describes the process of two first-grade teachers incorporating the Reading Recovery process of "roaming around the known" in their regular classrooms. Their purpose was to assess what their students knew about print. Data collection for these case studies took place for 16 weeks late in 1992; participants included 49 first-grade students from 2 classrooms, the teachers, and 2 reading recovery teachers who provided support. Unlike many traditional reading assessments, roaming is a responsive, informative assessment process for early readers. Each teacher developed a unique roaming model, and each teacher roamed in three phases. The first phase consisted of informal observations of students as they participated in literacy-related activities. The second phase included formal roaming sessions with individual students during which the teacher used highly scaffolded instruction. The third phase involved roaming with students in reading groups. Roaming enabled the teachers to make instructional decisions with confidence. The experiences of these teachers suggest that roaming could prove to be an effective assessment tool in the regular classroom. Two figures illustrating two classroom floor plans are included; the sequence of each teacher's activities during roaming, sample teacher notes and checklists, and a list of what one student learned about her students from roaming are attached. (Contains 27 references.) (Author/RS)

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A Study of Two First-Grade Teachers "Roaming Around the Known" With Their Students

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Sheryl Leeds
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National Reading Research Center

READING RESEARCH REPORT NO. 9
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About the National Reading Research Center

The National Reading Research Center (NRRC) is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research on reading and reading instruction. The NRRC is operated by a consortium of the University of Georgia and the University of Maryland College Park in collaboration with researchers at several institutions nationwide.

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Note. This report can be used with a videotape entitled *Roaming Around the Known,* which shows how a teacher used the roaming process with students in her regular classroom. Comments in the text of the report indicate when to view each segment of the video. To obtain a copy of the *Roaming Around the Known* video, please write: John F. O'Flahavan, National Reading Research Center, 2102 J. M. Patterson Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

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Abstract. This study describes the process of two first-grade teachers incorporating the Reading Recovery™ process of "Roaming around the Known" in their regular classrooms. Their purpose was to access what their students knew about print. Unlike many traditional reading assessments, roaming is a responsive, informative assessment process for early readers. Each teacher developed a unique roaming model, and each teacher roamed in three phases. The first phase consisted of informal observations of students as they participated in literacy-related activities. The second phase included formal roaming sessions with individual students during which the teacher used highly scaffolded instruction. The third phase involved roaming with students in reading groups. Roaming enabled the teachers to make instructional decisions with confidence. The experiences of these teachers suggest that roaming could prove to be an effective assessment tool in the regular classroom.

Most students who enter first grade have *some* concept of the forms and functions of reading. However, the depth and breadth of a child's knowledge of the alphabet, the conventions of print, reading strategies, and personal and social purposes served by reading are determined, in part, by the nature and quantity of literacy-related activity prior to formal schooling (Mason, 1984; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Teale, 1986). Consequently, first-grade students may differ substantially in areas such as knowledge of the alphabet, how to manage a book while reading, and what to do when confronted with an unfamiliar word. In addition, as emergent readers, how they interpret text (e.g., actively making predictions at key points in a story), and how

they perceive reading as an activity (e.g., reading as a form of entertainment) may vary greatly.

Classroom teachers who teach reading and writing must detect these differences in order to be responsive to them. Thus, the first challenge facing every first-grade teacher is to determine students' reading-related knowledge and abilities, conceptions of reading, and attitudes toward reading. However, traditional assessment tools used for screening or placement purposes are typically limited in scope and may fail to capture the breadth of information helpful to teachers. Readiness tests, basal placement tests, large-scale standardized measures, and informal reading inventories provide statistical information (e.g., grade equivalent scores), but they do not provide teachers with descriptions of how their students approach reading.

Recently, much attention has focused on constructing informal assessment approaches that are *aligned* with instruction (cf. Valencia, McGinley, & Pearson, 1990) and that provide descriptive portraits of students' reading development. One such approach is what Marie Clay termed "roaming around the known," which is a component of Reading Recovery™, the reading intervention program for at-risk young readers developed by Clay. Roaming around the known is the initial two-week phase of Reading Recovery during which a student and a trained Reading Recovery teacher participate jointly in reading- and writing-related tasks with the purpose of assessing what the student knows about print (Clay, 1979; Pinnell, 1989; Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990). In the past, roaming around the known has been a process used exclusively by trained Reading Recovery teachers as they worked individually with students. Yet, the learning that results from roaming around the known may be useful to regular classroom teachers as well. Through "roaming," classroom teachers may become knowledgeable about a wide range of student literacy behaviors and thus gain information that will assist them in making instructional decisions.

This report describes the ways that two first-grade teachers used the concept of roaming in their classrooms. First, we provide a rationale for using Clay's notions of roaming as a guide for developing more informative initial and ongoing assessments of literacy development among emergent readers. Second, we describe the teachers' research and development efforts. Third, we discuss the implications of our findings. We conclude by suggesting guidelines for roaming, which will enable teachers to initiate this process in their own classrooms.

A RATIONALE FOR ROAMING IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

This study evolved from our assumption that early literacy assessments which are based on the concept of roaming around the known could prove to be effective assessment tools for classroom teachers. In its present incarnation, roaming around the known provides Reading Recovery teachers with an in-depth and comprehensive profile of students' literacy behaviors. The purposes of roaming are to make the child feel successful as a reader and writer, and to give the teacher an opportunity to observe the child's knowledge, responses, behaviors, and strategies. The information gained from

the teacher's observation serves as the basis for future instruction, which is individually tailored for each student. Most students who receive Reading Recovery instruction experience growth in reading ability (Groom et al., 1992). During roaming, the Reading Recovery teacher establishes a trusting relationship with the children and engages them in enjoyable activities to assess what they know about print. The teacher creates situations in which students use their knowledge of print in a variety of ways, but does not introduce new concepts, strategies, or materials at this time. Typically, a Reading Recovery teacher will roam with a student for about ten days before any formal instruction begins.

Materials used during roaming may include but are not limited to a published book, a book that the child composes, a story that the teacher reads to the child, a story that the teacher writes for the child, or a story that the child dictates to the teacher. The teacher determines the selection and order in which these texts are used; this determination is based on the reader's ability to read orally a particular selection with 90% accuracy (Clay, 1979).

In the past, classroom teachers have employed a variety of assessment procedures for determining what their students know about print and reading. Teachers, specialists, and reading researchers recommend a composite of informal assessment opportunities that result in complementary information about the child's reading knowledge. Examples of these approaches would include teacher observations (Sulzby, 1990; Teale, 1990); questioning (Barr, Sadow, & Blachowicz, 1990); interest and attitude inventories (Leu & Kinzer, 1987); retelling tasks (Leu & Kinzer, 1987); word, sound, and letter recognition tasks (Barr, Sadow, & Blachowicz, 1990); interviews and conferences with parents and students (Morrow, 1990); and informal reading inventories.

Although a variety of assessment techniques and procedures are available, schools persist in their use of formal, group-administered measures, such as standardized reading achievement tests, basal reader tests, and formal readiness tests, to screen emergent readers for instructional and grouping purposes.

Many of these prevalent formal literacy assessments are ineffective tools for teachers for several reasons. First, standardized tests are grounded in "the concepts and techniques of psychometrics and behavioral objectives" (Calfee & Hiebert, 1991). They do not incorporate current views of literacy development as both multi-dimensional and connected to authentic activities (Morrow, 1990).

Second, many traditional early literacy assessments fail to document students' progress or reveal how children's understanding of print develops over time. Many standardized reading tests purport to measure students' comprehensive literacy knowledge and skill use, yet what may be gleaned from these "single exposure" assessments provides teachers with scant information for planning responsive instruction.

Third, traditional reading assessments do not, for the most part, value teacher judgment (Johnston, 1990, 1992; Porter, 1988). Teachers adjust their curriculum to suit the conceptual, procedural, and administrative demands of the test. Assessment information is then presented to them in the form of complex scores, scales, or stanines, which are difficult for teachers and parents to interpret and utilize

(Calfee & Hiebert, 1991; Stiggins, 1985) and often arrive too late to be of much use. Further, these assessments may measure students' test-taking skills rather than their reading abilities (Beach & Hynds, 1991).

Fourth, traditional assessments may be biased against minority populations (Barnes, 1972; Miller, 1980). Questions have been raised regarding the fairness of the administration, content, and scoring of some standardized tests (Johnston, 1984, 1992; Miller, 1980).

We contend that roaming approaches exhibit the potential to avoid the weaknesses of standardized measures and other normative assessments, while incorporating the positive aspects of other currently available assessments. A roaming approach places control over and responsibility for assessment in the hands of the teacher and capitalizes on the cultural and linguistic knowledge that students bring to the reading act. Students demonstrate what they understand about print and how they construct meaning from texts in a variety of literacy-related events that are directly assessed by the teacher. If constructed with students and for students, these events reflect the literate activity valued in the classroom community. Teachers then document what they have learned about their students in a manner that they find informative and illustrative. This assessment information can then be shared with a variety of audiences (e.g., parents, students, administrators).

The study described in this paper was part of a larger early intervention project (O'Flahavan & Wong, in progress) designed to improve the responsiveness of classroom literacy instruction for first- and second-grade students who are placed at-risk of reading failure in school. A research team consisting of five classroom teachers, five trained Reading Recovery teachers, five Chapter I teachers, three central system administrators, two university researchers, and several graduate students are currently working in five classrooms where teachers have begun to transform their comprehensive literacy programs. The evolving program is grounded in a sociocultural perspective on literacy learning and instruction (e.g., Au, 1993; Moll, 1992), with an emphasis on creating the social conditions in which teachers and students can socially construct reading-related knowledge (e.g., early reading strategies). At the urging of their Reading Recovery colleagues, two of the five regular classroom teachers explored how a roaming process might be used in the classroom as a vehicle to increase the constructive potential of assessment (Johnston, 1992) and align it more closely with instruction.

METHOD

Participants

Data collection for these case studies took place for sixteen weeks between September and December of 1992. Participants included 49 first-grade students from two self-contained classrooms, their two first-grade teachers, and two Reading Recovery teachers who provided expertise and collegial support. The researchers included a graduate student (Marks) and a professor (O'Flahavan).

Both teachers are new to mainstream first-grade classroom contexts and are currently engaged in applying what they know about teaching and learning to their classroom situa-

tions. Larry Pennington, a European American male, taught first grade for three years. He received a liberal arts degree in history and classical languages and a master's degree in special education. He spent seventeen years as a special education teacher, working with severely handicapped children in a public school center. After many years of working with this population, Larry felt ready for a change and took a number of regular education courses to prepare himself for this transition.

Larry was eager to participate in the project because he is excited about Reading Recovery. He observed his students working with the Reading Recovery teachers in his school. As he learned more about Reading Recovery, Larry came to view it as a successful program for those students who qualify for the instruction. Larry decided to adapt the Reading Recovery process of roaming to his regular classroom in order to discover what his students knew about print and how well they could read.

As Larry's views about teaching reading have evolved in the last three years, his views about what constitutes valid literacy assessments has changed. His approach to reading has moved away from the skills-based approach to reading instruction (stressed in special education) to a more holistic approach. For example, during a typical day in Larry's classroom (see Larry's floor plan, Figure 1), children participate in a variety of independent, small group, and whole class literacy activities. Small group and independent activities include reading in the "Book Nook," going to the library, composing stories in the "Writers' Cafe," listening to books on tape, working at the computer using language arts software, writing in journals, reading charts and class-made books, and meeting in a reading group. Whole class activities include choral reading of rhymes and stories, read aloud, comparisons of different versions of a story, seasonal projects, handwriting, and the creation of class books.

Chris Sutton, a European American female and an experienced teacher, received a master's degree in education with a specialty in bilingual and urban education. Fluent in Spanish and English, Chris had taught English as a Second Language (ESL) for 14 years and had worked with K-6th-grade ESL students in a variety of pull-out and self-contained programs in different regions of the U.S.; however, the 1992-93 school year was Chris's first experience teaching native English speakers in a regular classroom. The diversity of the student population in her classroom made her background particularly helpful (about half of Chris's students spoke Spanish). As she circulated around the room helping her students, Chris switched easily between English and Spanish.

Chris's ESL background shaped her views about how to teach reading effectively. She believes that reading should be taught holistically and that the focus of reading instruction should be on helping children to comprehend what they read. To this end, she uses a language experience approach to teaching reading and uses strategies such as encouraging children who have English as a second language to read books in Spanish as well as in English.

Chris's students engage in a variety of independent, small group, and whole class literacy activities throughout the day (see Chris's floor plan, Figure 2). They read and sing the poems written on the charts that cover

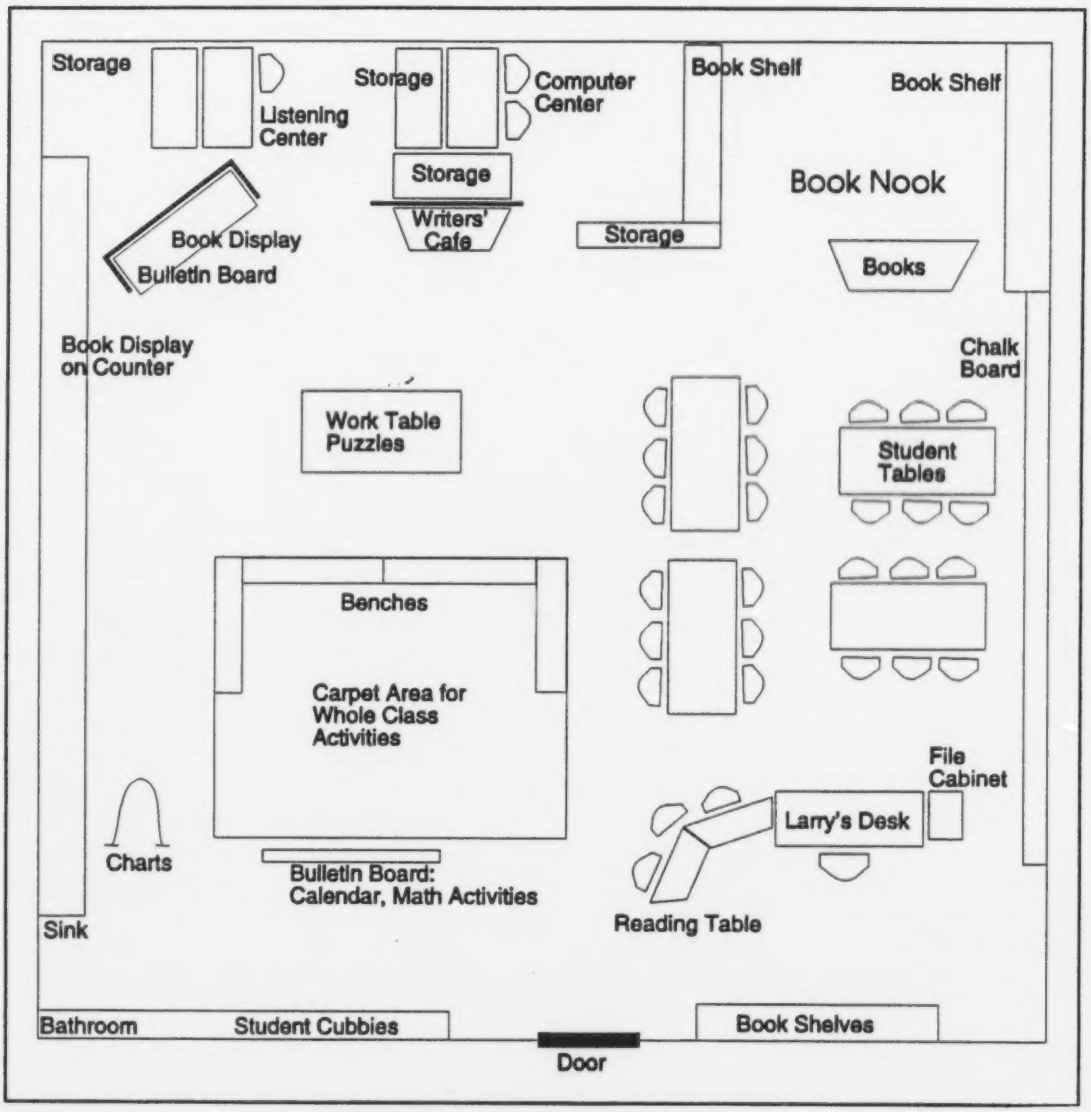

Figure 1. Floor Plan for Larry Pennington's Classroom

the classroom walls. They select books from the bins in the "Book Nook" and settle into cushions to "buddy read" with a friend. They listen to stories on tape and follow along in matching texts. They play spelling and word games with partners at the computer. They also work at the Writers' Station, which contains different kinds of paper, pencils, and pens. Whole class activities include choral reading, read aloud, reading groups, and journal writing.

Chris's desire to become involved in this project stemmed from her belief in Reading Recovery as a successful tutorial reading program. She wanted to learn more about Reading Recovery in the hope that the knowledge could inform her classroom instruction. Chris was introduced to the concept of roaming by Larry, Sheryl, and Janet, and she decided to adapt it to her classroom because she wanted to discover how well her students read and understood the reading process. She also wanted to use the members of the project as resources as she adapted her ESL experiences to a regular classroom and assumed the challenge of organizing and working with reading groups.

Data Sources and Analyses

Data sources included field notes of classroom observations, audiotapes of semi-structured interviews, videotapes of selected roaming sessions, and photocopies of artifacts generated during roaming. Interviews with the teachers were analyzed in order to understand and describe their questions, concerns, views, and definitions of roaming. Audiotapes and videotapes assisted researchers in describing the roaming process.

Because Larry began to explore roaming in his classroom, on his own, early in the academic year, data collection in Larry's classroom was less systematic than in Chris's classroom. Chris learned from Larry's attempts and was able to begin with a more refined system. For the most part, Larry's attempts are documented retrospectively in this paper, reconstructed through a series of interviews and document analyses. On the other hand, Chris's attempts were captured as they occurred and are reported here in full.

Semi-structured interviews with Larry and Chris. Numerous interviews were conducted with Larry and Chris in order to elicit information about their backgrounds, views of reading, motivations for participating in the project, and reasons for adapting roaming for use in the regular classroom. Larry was interviewed after he had completed his roaming. The purpose of the interviews was to understand Larry's methodology, evaluate his experiences, and gain perspective on the documents he generated during roaming.

Chris was interviewed before, during, and after each roaming session with a student. These interviews involved a discussion of Chris's roaming and a documentation of her evolving conceptions of the meaning and purposes of that process. The following questions guided those interviews: (a) What were your perceptions of the roaming sessions that you held today? (b) What does roaming around the known mean to you? (c) What kinds of information does roaming give you about your students? and (d) In your view, how does roaming differ from more common assessments?

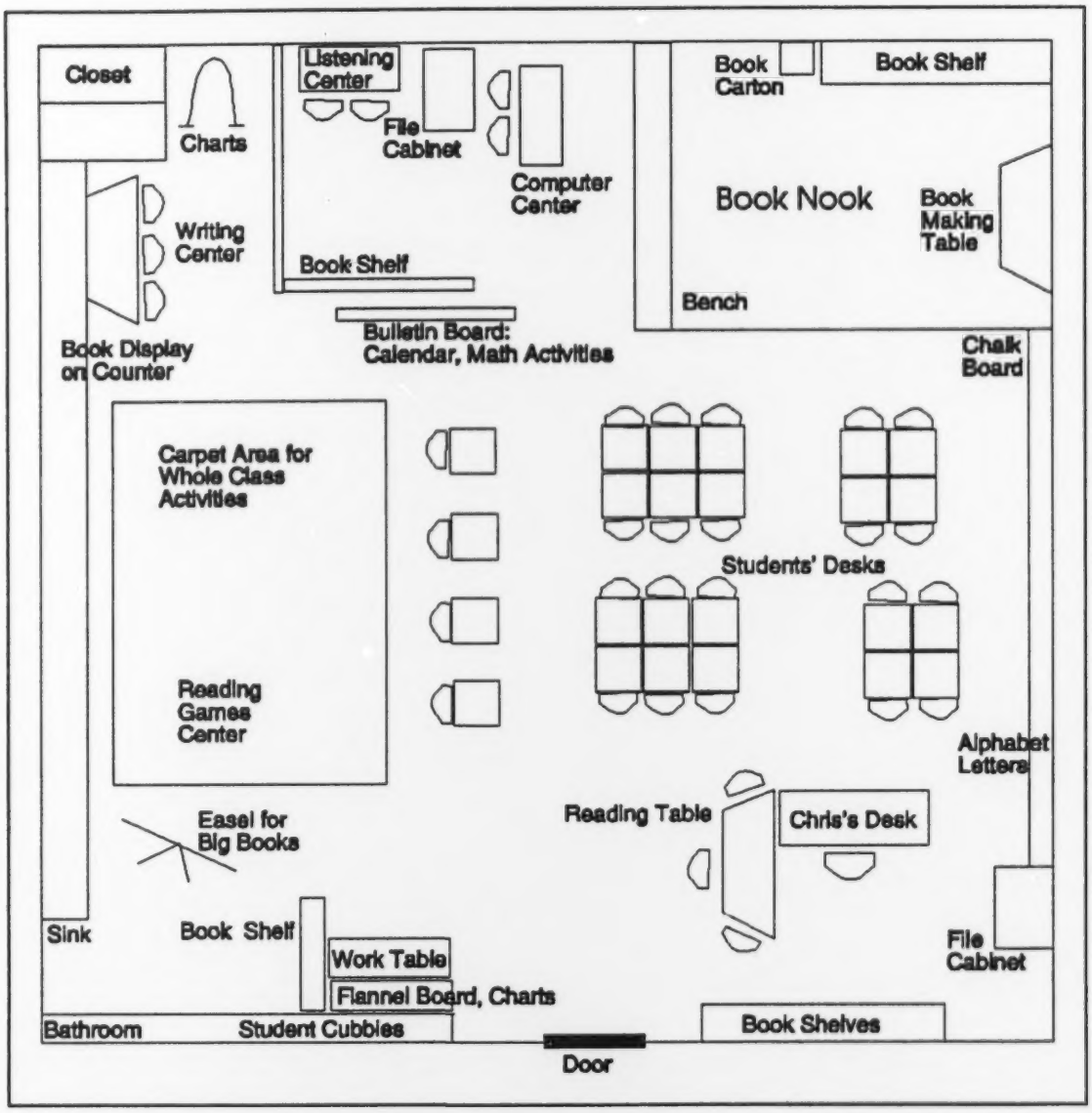

Figure 2. Floor Plan for Chris Sutton's Classroom

Videotaped observations in Chris's room. Roaming sessions for 20 students in Chris's classroom were videotaped using a camcorder on a tripod and a remote pressure-zone microphone set on a table. We videotaped Chris to get an in-depth understanding of how she roamed. Illustrative excerpts from those videotaped sessions have been combined in the video entitled *Roaming Around the Known* (see note under **About the Authors**). Instructions about viewing that video in conjunction with this report (e.g., *view Segments 1 and 2 now*) appear in next section under the heading **Chris's Model**.

FINDINGS

Larry and Chris both chose to use a three-phase roaming approach (see Table 1), although the specific sequences of their activities within the phases differed. Both teachers began by (a) informally observing their students as they engaged in whole class, partner, and individual activities; (b) conducting formal roaming sessions with individual students; and (c) roaming in reading groups. The teachers' decisions to roam in three phases represents a departure from Reading Recovery roaming, which primarily involves the second phase of the model Chris and Larry developed.

Larry's Model

In order to understand what his students knew about print, Larry developed his own method for roaming within the prevalent literacy activities that characterize his classroom. He was assisted by Sheryl Leeds and Janet Steiner-O'Malley, the Reading Recovery teachers in his school, who, over a period of six months (April-September 1992), familiarized him with Reading Recovery techniques and strategies. Traditionally, the roaming phase of Reading Recovery consists of a 10-day cycle of 30-minute daily lessons. Initially, Larry completed roaming in about five weeks. Larry roamed again three months later. This time, he completed roaming in a month.

Table 1. Larry and Chris's Roaming Phases

Phase 1: Informal Observations
Observations of Whole Class Activities
Observations of Partner Activities
Observations of Individual Activities
Phase 2: Formal Roaming Sessions
Book Introduction
Task Introduction
Scaffolded Reading
Concluding Tasks
Phase 3: Roaming in Reading Groups
Observations of Reading Strategies
Observations of Group Interactions

Larry's roaming consisted of three phases: informal observations, formal roaming sessions, and roaming in reading groups.

Phase 1: Informal observations. During the first phase, Larry spent about a week and a half informally observing his students during relatively unstructured instructional events. Each day, he chose certain students to observe.

He observed these students for about an hour. He noticed which students could locate words on a chart, who read willingly and with pleasure, and who was able to select books independently. He watched the children participate in "buddy reading" in order to understand their interest in books and their reading strategies. He observed students during read aloud and journal writing sessions. He documented these first impressions about each child on sheets of paper that would later be attached to notes of his other observations gleaned from formal roaming sessions.

Phase 2: Formal roaming sessions. The second phase of Larry's roaming involved working with children individually while other students engaged in "buddy reading." He used a range of books to roam with his students, such as *The Birthday Cake* (Sunshine, Reading Recovery, Level 1) and *All Through the Town* (Silver Burdett Ginn, Pre-primer 1). He used a short, patterned book for beginning readers and four stories chosen from a pre-primer basal reader for more accomplished readers. Larry spent a week and a half roaming for an hour with three or four students each day. Each roaming session with a student lasted for 10-20 minutes, depending upon the student's reading ability. During this phase of roaming, Larry supported each student's reading of the text by providing him/her with prompts and cues. If the child was able to read independently, Larry would minimize his own participation in the reading of the text, allowing the student to take the lead.

Appendix A outlines the typical sequence of activities during these formal roaming sessions. Typically, each session began with a "Story Introduction" strategy that Larry learned from Reading Recovery. He covered the title of the book and gave the student clues such as "These people are making something. Do you think you know what they're making?" Larry observed whether the child could guess or read the title. If the child could not read the title, Larry responded, "This says the birthday____. What do you think that word says?" Next, Larry suggested a purpose for the reading that was to follow: "These children are doing something. Let's read the book to see what they're doing." At this point, Larry observed the child to see if he/she could locate the text, point to the words, locate the front and back of the book, understand which way to read the book, demonstrate voice-print match, read fluently, follow the story line, predict story events, follow and continue story patterns, and self-correct.

Larry documented his roaming by taking descriptive notes about each student (for an example, see Appendix B). Using Larry's experiences and Janet's and Sheryl's expertise as Reading Recovery teachers, the three colleagues formalized a checklist that was used by Chris two months later (see Appendix C for a version of this checklist that Chris used in roaming with a student). The checklist was designed to capture students' reading abilities, strategies, and motivation to read. Larry and his colleagues decided to document students' interest in books because they believe that motivation is an important aspect of reading. They included a "concepts of print" section in order to discover the scope of children's knowledge about sounds, letters, punctuation, and books. The checklist also documents

readers' strategies such as locating picture cues and identifying letters of the alphabet as well as more advanced strategies.

Phase 3: Roaming in reading groups. The third roaming phase consisted of Larry's observing students as they worked in reading groups. Larry used what he had learned about each student to place the children in preliminary groups according to their literacy knowledge and strategy use. Larry spent about an hour and a half a day for a week and a half roaming with four different reading groups, each of which consisted of four or five members. Larry watched how his students handled texts. He noted students' reading behaviors and difficulties. He asked himself whether he had overestimated or underestimated any student's reading competence. He sought to maintain an appropriate range of reading abilities which would allow students in each group to be challenged but not overwhelmed. He observed his students working with the reading materials that he had selected in order to assess which materials were appropriate for each group. He documented his observations by marking a list of students' names with notes about each child's performance in the group. He placed pluses or minuses next to each student's name to indicate areas of strength or weakness. If he placed the same symbol by a child's name three times, Larry changed that student's reading group placement accordingly. As a result, the composition of Larry's instructional groups shifted throughout the year.

Larry's perceptions of his roaming process. Larry believed that his roaming process enabled him to pinpoint the reading strengths of each child. For example, during his reading with one student, Larry observed that the student read the word *chocolate* instead of the word *brown*. As the child pronounced the word *chocolate*, he broke it into two syllables (*choco-* and *-late*) and pointed to the beginning and end of the word *brown* in the text. This showed Larry that the student understood that words were on the page, and that they could be parsed into smaller units. However, the student did not exhibit knowledge about sound-symbol correspondence.

Larry used the notes that he took during roaming to document each child's reading abilities and to reflect upon particular aspects of the child's literacy. For example, his written comment that one girl had not demonstrated a voice-print match caused him to reflect upon the sources of this child's difficulty. He realized that perhaps she had not known the names of colors. He resolved to work with her again to teach her color names and to see if she could demonstrate voice-print match using another text. Larry also used his notes to document students' errors. For example, he noted that one student read the word *found* instead of *find*.

Larry continued these assessments as the year progressed. He repeated the second phase in January 1993. He wanted to identify reading gains that students had made since September, reassess reading group placements, and discover if there was a match between what students could do individually and in a group. Larry worked with each student as he had done in September. He used the same materials that he had used in the fall; however, this time, he also asked each student to read more challenging texts.

Larry found roaming to be an informative assessment tool that allowed him to assess many factors, such as a students' fluency, reading level, and interest in books.

Chris's Model

Chris began roaming with her students in September 1992. She developed her roaming approach by collaborating with Larry, Sheryl, and Janet. Chris met with Larry to discuss roaming and attended an in-school development session conducted by Janet and Sheryl. Although Chris used many of Larry's strategies, she adapted roaming to suit her classroom. Instead of using a predetermined set of trade books as Larry had done, Chris selected a wide variety of books and used them in different sequences. While Larry conducted his roaming exclusively in English, Chris roamed in English and Spanish, often combining the two languages in a single session.

Chris used Larry's three-phase roaming approach. The first phase consisted of informal observations of students as they engaged in enjoyable whole class, small group, and independent literacy activities, such as buddy reading, journal writing, and choral reading. Many of Chris's observations occurred when students were engaged in learning center activities (e.g., in the Book Nook). The second phase involved formal roaming sessions with individual students. The final phase consisted of observing and working with students in instructional groups. By early December, Chris had engaged in all three phases.

Phase 1: Informal observations. Like Larry, Chris spent time observing her students as they participated in reading- and writing-related activities in her classroom. She observed students engaging in buddy reading and noted their interests and abilities. To identify their understanding of sound-symbol correspondence and English orthography, she watched her students as they wrote in their journals. She observed her students as she read stories aloud in order to identify who was able to pay attention, retell a story, make predictions, follow a story line, and make connections to familiar stories. She noticed which children displayed proficiency in English, participated in storytelling, and picked up books to read during free time. These informal observations provided Chris with the first opportunity to watch her students interact with print. She documented these first impressions by making mental notes about each child.

Phase 2: Formal roaming sessions. Appendix D outlines the typical sequence of activities in Chris's roaming with individual students. She began each session by selecting a variety of trade books and randomly calling one student at a time to work with her. Chris either asked the student to select a book from those available or she chose a book herself. During a subsequent interview, Chris explained that she wanted to roam with each child using a book that he or she could read. If the child chose a book that was too difficult, Chris would select a more appropriate text (*view Video Segment 1 now*).

In working with Fernando, for instance, Chris begins by completing the top portion of the checklist. By asking Fernando to read with her, Chris presents the task as a joint one — she and Fernando are both readers struggling

to solve the puzzle of reading a new book. Chris attempts to build Fernando's confidence in himself as a reader by encouraging his efforts ("That's a good guess because it starts with a *p*"), even after he incorrectly guesses the title of the book. Chris does a "Story Introduction" of the book and tells Fernando the story pattern, with the intention of helping him feel that reading this book is within his reach. She asks Fernando to point to each word as he reads. She watches to see whether Fernando can achieve voice-print match and whether or not he uses picture cues.

In the next part of the formal roaming session, Chris and the student engage in scaffolded reading. Depending on how much of the text the student can read on his or her own, Chris repeats and rephrases portions of the text, models strategies, uses non-verbal communication, elicits students' reading strategies, repeats story patterns, encourages, and points out errors and omissions. She also engages the student in identifying pictures and guessing, locating, framing, or covering particular letters or punctuation marks in the story (*view Video Segment 2 now*).

In working with Dominique, for example, Chris presents the roaming task as a shared effort. She takes cues from Dominique in order to determine if and when her help is required. Chris both encourages Dominique ("You remembered!") and challenges her to solve any reading difficulties that she encounters. When Dominique finishes reading the page without having read two of the words, Chris brings the problem to Dominique's attention and helps her solve it by rereading the page and pointing to each word. Chris's use of the word *we* reminds Dominique that she and her teacher are reading together. Chris models what good readers do by reading with expression, labeling characters' actions ("Now he's asking a question"), and making predictions about the story ("I think this boy is going to answer over here"). Chris's comment to another student ("She's reading me a book") is intended to build Dominique's confidence.

As students progress through the text, Chris uses a number of techniques to elicit their understanding of the story. She gives them clues, poses questions, asks them to make predictions, and elicits their personal knowledge and background experiences. During roaming, she provides them with reading strategies, techniques, and skills. She suggests that they use pictures as clues, look at the first letters of words to figure them out, and examine the contexts of words for meaning (*view Video Segment 3 now*).

In working with My, Chris is interested in finding out what My knows about quotation marks. She roams around My's knowledge of print and literacy by asking him what the marks are for and what the author is doing by using them. When she feels certain that My has little knowledge of quotation marks, Chris teaches him about them using an example from his own life. Chris concludes this mini-lesson by explaining and labeling quotation marks ("These words are the words that you actually say, and these marks are called quotation marks"). Chris's decision to teach My about quotation marks is a shift away from roaming as it is used in Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery teachers refrain from teaching new concepts during roaming.

After Chris has completed roaming with one book, she asks each student to read one or two more books. She roams with those books using the same procedures. Then she fills out the checklist, takes notes, and for the purposes of this research, thinks aloud about what she has learned about each student (*view Video Segment 4 now*). After roaming with Justin, for example, Chris notes that he read with few errors and used picture clues to understand the story. He read with expression and used some beginning consonant sounds to decode certain words. This provides Chris with a current record of Justin's understanding of print (see Appendix C). When Chris roams with Justin in the future, she will be able to document his evolution as a reader.

Phase 3: Roaming in reading groups. Like Larry, Chris used what she learned from Phases 1 and 2 to place her students in tentative reading groups according to their reading abilities. Chris's observations of her students' involvement in tasks during reading group time constituted the third roaming phase. Chris wished to see if the observations that she had made while working with individual students matched what she saw when she worked with those students in reading groups. She was interested in documenting the range of student abilities in each group. She watched to see which students were frustrated or bored. She tried to place strong readers with good reading strategies in each group to provide models for weaker readers. She observed which students were proficient in English. She was also interested in how peer interactions affected her students' reading behaviors.

Chris felt that this third roaming phase was an opportunity for her to learn more about what she could do with each group. If she introduced a concept such as word families and saw that students in the group were not ready for it, she noted that this activity would have to wait. As Chris explained, "I am adjusting my roaming in response to what they do." Thus, as a result of her observations in Phase 3, Chris made some adjustments in her reading group placements, which she has continued to do. Like Larry, Chris believes that this third roaming phase is ongoing.

Chris's perceptions of her roaming process. During interviews, Chris expressed her belief that roaming was a means of discovering what each of her students knew about reading and print. She felt that unlike many traditional assessments, roaming provided her with a more complete picture of what children bring to reading tasks. It enabled her to explore her students' reading strategies, concepts of print, and motivation to read, and allowed her flexibility in assessing the reading abilities of students with limited proficiency in English.

Appendix E outlines what Chris discovered about her students' literacy. She gleaned information about *students' awareness of print*, such as which students could match their fingers to print, demonstrate voice-print match, isolate particular words or letters, and identify the location of print on a page. She observed *students' strategies*, such as which of her students were guessing rather than reading. She assessed the level of each student's sight vocabulary and learned which students read from memory and from pictures. She observed

which students noticed when words did not match pictures, read fluently and with expression, self-corrected, used context clues, prepared their mouths to produce certain sounds, possessed decoding skills, and remembered and recognized words seen earlier in a text. She identified *students' interests*, noting who was interested in stories, who read books from the Book Nook during free time, who felt most comfortable reading familiar stories, who told stories, who read books aloud, who attended to pictures, and who treated books with care. Roaming also gave Chris new perceptions about *students' second language abilities*. She determined which ESL students were progressing in reading, speaking, and listening, and observed whether or not these students knew the alphabet in English and Spanish.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

By the time students reach school age, they have had some exposure to text although their experiences and awareness vary considerably (Juel, 1991; Morrow & Smith, 1990; Teale, 1986). Teachers who work with young children learning to read must discover what their students know about text and reading if instruction is to be responsive to individual differences.

The classroom teachers in this study, Larry Pennington and Chris Sutton, were committed to understanding what their students already knew about reading, and to adapting their instruction to this understanding. Because they were convinced that traditional approaches to this problem were inadequate, they developed approaches to assessment based on the initial phase of the Reading Recovery Program called "roaming around the known." Their approaches provided them with a variety of opportunities to learn about their students' conceptions of print and their abilities as readers. During interviews, both Chris and Larry described how roaming had helped them to see reading as a highly complex process. As a result of roaming, they felt confident about making important instructional decisions such as forming and reforming instructional groups and choosing texts to suit the student and the instructional situation.

Larry's and Chris's experiences suggest that in the regular classroom, roaming offers teachers a viable alternative to more prevalent assessment approaches. First, roaming allows teachers to discover what their students know about print. Second, through roaming, a teacher can assess each student's ability to participate in authentic classroom literacy activities, thereby achieving a closer alignment between assessment and instruction (Valencia et al., 1990). Third, a roaming approach permits observation of a student's literacy behaviors in multiple situations, yielding a richer, more fluid understanding of the student's ability to participate fully in the classroom culture.

Larry's and Chris's experiences also suggest a number of ways in which roaming processes may be developed further. The two approaches documented in this study consisted of three phases: informal observations, individual sessions with students, and roaming in reading groups. Roaming could be extended to include other reading-based activities. For example, teachers could roam with their stu-

dents as the students work in learning activity centers. This process would enable teachers to understand how their students engage in reading activities in a classroom library, writing station, or response center. Teachers might also roam with students as they engage in reading- and writing-related activities with their peers. Roaming with students as they participate in activities such as peer writing conferences or book talks would allow teachers to assess how students interact with print in a variety of literacy contexts.

The documentation of what teachers learn about students is an essential component of roaming. Teachers may wish to develop further the roaming checklist that Chris used. On the other hand, they might create a number of checklists, each of which corresponds to a different roaming phase. For example, there might be a checklist for the initial observational phase which highlights reading behaviors such as which books students choose to read during free time. A checklist for the second, individual phase would focus more upon how a student engages in reading in a one-on-one situation. Another checklist might capture what teachers learn by interacting with students in reading groups. These phase-specific checklists would serve as running commentaries on students' changing knowledge of print.

This detailed examination of the development and implementation of two roaming approaches can help other teachers use these approaches to explore what their students know about print and students' unique reading processes. The approaches presented in this study can serve as starting points for teachers who may tailor them to fit their own needs and interests. Assessing students' reading knowledge is one of the most important challenges that classroom teachers face. Because roaming is an assessment process, it allows teachers to learn about students' understandings of print as they grow and develop over time.

GUIDELINES FOR ROAMING IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

Roaming enabled Larry and Chris to learn a great deal about their students' concepts of print. Their experiences can benefit other teachers interested in using roaming processes in their own classrooms. Just as Chris and Larry developed their own roaming models, teachers can adapt roaming processes according to their teaching styles and classroom situations. There is no "correct" way for classroom teachers to roam with their students. Some teachers may decide to use specific Reading Recovery procedures such as story introductions during roaming. Others may create their own means of roaming with their students. Although there is no one way to roam, we offer guidelines for teachers interested in initiating roaming in their classrooms.

Phase 1: Student Observations

During the first roaming phase, teachers should observe each student in a variety of literacy-related contexts. The purpose of these observations is to see how children interact with print and to identify their reading strategies, abilities, and attitudes. The observations involve watching each student as he or she engages in whole class, partner, and individual

activities. Informal observations might focus on buddy reading, journal writing, choral reading, and periods during which students work in reading and writing centers engaging in activities such as story writing or listening to a story on an audiotape while following along in a book. The teacher documents all of these observations, describing students' behaviors and levels of interest and attention.

Phase 2: One-on-One Sessions

The purpose of the second roaming phase is to pinpoint each student's literacy-related knowledge and understanding. Because this phase involves one-on-one roaming sessions between the teacher and each student, a more detailed list of guidelines for teachers to use during this formal phase follows.

*1. **Select a book and establish rapport with the student.*** The teacher fills out the top portion of the checklist with the date and the student's name and selects a book. Clay (1979) recommends that the child should be able to read the selected text with at least 90% accuracy. Texts might include a published book, a book that the child composes, a story that the teacher reads to the child, a story that the teacher writes for the child, or a story that the child dictates to the teacher (Clay, 1979). The teacher may also turn any of the child's experiences into texts with which to roam.

*2. **Introduce the book and the task.*** The teacher previews the book, introduces the story, and places it in context. Next, the teacher states a purpose for reading. The teacher asks the student to guess the book's title from looking at the cover, and previews the author's name, the book's pages, and the plot, story pattern, and vocabulary. Then the teacher provides the student with directions and explanations concerning the task, asking him or her to read the story with expression, to point to each word as it is read, to guess, find, frame, and cover words, letters, and punctuation marks, and to identify and discuss the illustrations.

*3. **Participate in shared reading.*** The teacher and student read the text jointly. They take turns reading and rereading portions of the story. As they do so, they compare pictures and words and discuss the book's illustrations. The teacher repeats the story pattern until the child is able to follow and repeat it, and asks the student to fill in, locate, and guess words, letters, and names in the text. If it is likely to prove helpful, the teacher may choose to define words and demonstrate story patterns and ideas non-verbally. For example, she may use her hands to make gestures or to point to words or pictures.

*4. **Ask questions, provide clues, and encourage the student to make predictions.*** Throughout roaming, the teacher asks the student questions in order to learn more about what the student knows. These questions may concern words, stories, books, letters, and author's intent. The teacher also asks the student questions about his or her literacy experiences in and out of school. The teacher provides clues about first letters, beginning and end sounds, word meanings, and word loca-

tions. Students are asked to make predictions about the story plot and about the characters' feelings and actions. This process allows the teacher to see what the student understands about the text.

*5. **Repeat, remind, and reword.*** As the joint reading continues, the teacher repeats the story pattern and, when necessary, reminds the student about the story plot and vocabulary. The teacher may correct a student's pronunciation by correctly rewording what the student has said. This assists the student and places the teacher in the role of helper and supporter.

*6. **Elicit the student's reading strategies and personal/background knowledge.*** In order to discover what the student knows about print, the teacher elicits the student's reading strategies. This goal may be accomplished by asking the student questions and making comments. The teacher elicits the student's personal and background knowledge, allowing the teacher to become familiar with aspects of the student's life outside the classroom that might affect his or her experiences and attitudes in school.

*7. **Praise the student.*** Praising students during roaming encourages them, makes them feel like readers, and builds their confidence in their own abilities.

*8. **Read a new book with the student and repeat the steps above.*** After the teacher has roamed with one text, he or she may decide to repeat the steps outlined above with an easier or more difficult book. The teacher determines if he or she has gleaned a sufficient amount of information about the student after roaming with the first text.

*9. **Document the roaming session.*** It is critical to document the roaming session, because the documentation will provide the teacher with a means by which to check a student's progress throughout the year. The teacher fills out the checklist, recording what has been learned about each student.

Phase 3: Reading Group Observations

The third phase involves roaming in reading groups. During this phase, the teacher observes each student as he or she engages in reading group activities. Particular attention is given to students' reading strategies, interests, motivation, and abilities to interact with others in this group situation. During this phase, the teacher poses questions about the students in the group. Are they interested in coming to the group? Do all of them participate in the activities? Do they appear engaged? How well are they able to complete reading group activities and assignments? Do they attend to one another? Teachers watch to see if the observations that they have made during the first two roaming phases are confirmed in this new context. The observations that the teacher makes during this phase may lead to changes in the compositions of the reading groups. For example, if the teacher notes that a student is reticent about participating in one reading group, he or she may move that student into a different group and observe the results. The teacher documents all observations during this phase in

order to have a record of students' progress and literacy growth.

Classroom teachers may decide to engage in roaming processes at various points throughout the year. Teachers may roam at the beginning of the school year in order to assess what students understand about print as they enter a new grade. They may also choose to roam when new literacy events are introduced in the classroom so that they can observe what their students have learned from participating in those events. Roaming at the end of the year allows teachers to have a sense of what students understand after having engaged in literacy events throughout the year.

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APPENDIX A

Sequence of Larry's Activities During the Second Phase of Roaming

1. Introduced book and task
- Previewed the book/story introduction; placed story in context
- Set purpose for reading
  - Had student guess the book's title from looking at the cover
  - Previewed the book pages, plot, and vocabulary
- Established story pattern
- Gave directions/explanations concerning task
  - Asked each student to:
    - Read story
    - Point to words as he/she read
    - Read with expression
    - Guess/find/frame/cover words/letters/punctuation
    - Identify pictures

2. Participated in scaffolded reading
- Read/reread portions of story
- Compared pictures and words
- Student filled in/located/guessed words/letters/names
- Took turns reading; looked at pictures together
- Repeated story pattern until child followed/repeated it

3. Gave clues
- About first letters, beginning/end sounds of words, word meanings/locations

4. Asked questions
- About words/stories/books/letters/author's intent

5. Asked students to predict
- Plot
- Characters' feelings/actions

6. Elicited students' background knowledge

7. Repeated/reminded/reworded
- Story pattern
- Plot
- Words in story

8. Modelled
- Reading techniques/strategies

9. Sought/elicited students' reading strategies
- Comments
- Questions

10. Praised and encouraged students
- Made students feel like readers
- Built students' confidence
- Showed respect for students

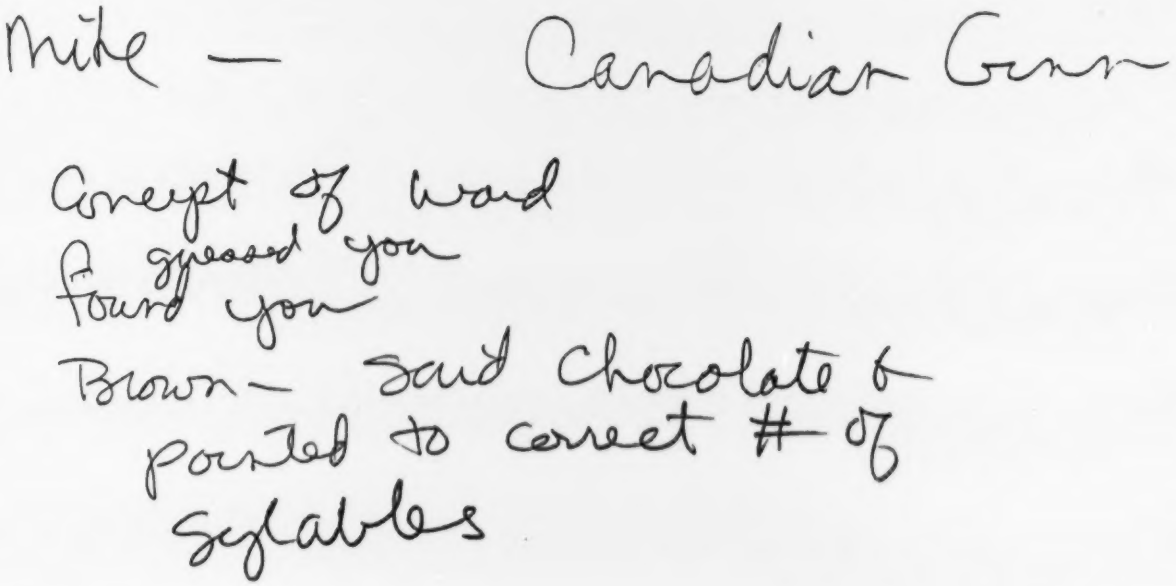
11. Read new book(s) with student

12. Concluded task

13. Documented roaming

APPENDIX B

A Sample of Notes Composed by Larry Pennington During a Formal Roaming Session



APPENDIX C

The Checklist That Chris Used During Justin's Formal Roaming Session

Emergent/Early Fluency Reading Checklist

National Reading Research Center-Arlington Public Schools Project
By: S. Leeds, J. O'Malley, L. Pennington, C. Sutton

not much use of beginning consist

match, good use of pictures as clues: used lots of expression in read

STUDENT Justin DATE 10/16

I. INTEREST IN BOOKS Is willing to read	Does not apply	Most of the time	Some-times	Not noticed
Shows pleasure in reading			✓	
Selects books independently				
Chooses books of appropriate difficulty				
Samples a variety of genres				
II. CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT				
Knows front of book		✓		
Knows print contains message		✓		
Knows where to start		✓		
Knows which way to go		✓		
Knows return sweep to left		✓		
Has voice — print match		✓		
Knows first and last concept				
Identifies top/bottom of picture/page		✓		
Identifies left page before right		-		
Knows meaning of question mark				
Knows meaning of period				
Knows meaning of exclamation mark				
Knows meaning of quotation marks				

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Locate upper/lower case letters				
Knows one letter/two letters				
Knows one word/two words				
Knows capital letter				
III. EMERGENT STRATEGIES				
Can match words that are same				
Can write name/spell orally				
Can recognize similarities in words				
i.e./ is, am, here, I, come, said, can,				
look, and, a, my, the, mom, like, go,				
dad, we, up, to				
Can identify letters/sounds of alphabet				
Can identify color words/number words by matching/reading				
Can count objects				
Uses picture cues				
IV. READING STRATEGIES				
Uses meaning cues				
Uses knowledge of language to understand text (structure)				
Uses visual cues				
Substitutes words with similar meaning				
Repeats for meaning				
Self-corrects				
Takes risks as a reader				
Retells story				
Demonstrates predicting and confirming				
Reads independently				

APPENDIX D

Sequence of Chris's Activities During the Second Phase of Roaming

1. Selected book and established rapport
- Selected books and placed them on reading table
- Filled out top of checklist (student's name and the date)
- Called student to reading table
- Made child feel comfortable; established rapport
- Chatted with the child
- Asked student to choose a book to read (sometimes)

2. Introduced book and task
- Previewed the book/story introduction; placed story in context
- Set purpose for reading
  - Had child guess about the book from looking at the cover
  - Read title aloud
  - Told author's name
  - Previewed the plot
  - Previewed/explained vocabulary
  - Showed each page
- Established story pattern
- Gave directions/explanations concerning task
  - Asked each student to:
    - Read story
    - Point to words as he/she reads
    - Read with expression
    - Guess/find/frame/cover words/letters/punctuation
    - Identify pictures

3. Participated in scaffolded reading
- Teacher and student as readers who need to figure things out
  - Read/reread portions of story
  - Compared pictures and words
  - Teacher filled in/located/guessed words/letters/names
  - Took turns reading
  - Repeated story pattern until child followed/repeated it
  - Student and teacher looked at pictures together

4. Spoke in English and Spanish
- Depended upon student's proficiency
- Teacher translated book/words/letters

5. Gave clues
- First letter clues; beginning sounds
- End of word sounds
- Word meanings/locations

6. Asked questions
- About words/stories/books/letters/author's intent
- About student's literacy experiences

7. Asked students to predict; predicted herself
- Plot
- Characters' feelings/actions

Appendix D continued

8. Elicited students' personal knowledge/background knowledge; Shared her own
9. Repeated/reminded/reworded
- Story pattern
- Plot
- What student said
- Words in story
- Sometimes corrected pronunciation by rewording

10. Modelled
- Reading techniques/strategies

11. Used non-verbal communication
- To define words
- To demonstrate story pattern

12. Sought/elicited students' reading strategies
- Made students feel like readers
- Built students' confidence
- Showed respect for students
- Exhibited a sense of humor

14. Refrained from roaming with students who did not want to read
- Rescheduled roaming with them

15. Pointed out errors/omissions (sometimes)
16. Taught; provided students with reading strategies
- Strategies/techniques
- Letters
- Punctuation
- Vocabulary

17. Read a new book(s) with student
18. Concluded task
- Thanked student
- Told student what to do next

19. Documented roaming
- Filled out checklist
- Dictated what she learned about each student from roaming

APPENDIX E

What Chris Learned About Her Students From Roaming

Students' Awareness of Print

- Can match finger to print
- Has concepts about print
- Understands that when he/she is still talking and runs out of words on the page that there is something wrong
- Has the voice-print match
- Can isolate/show/frame certain words/letters
- Has letter-sound correspondence
- Is looking at the words and guessing
- Has good sight vocabulary
- Knows where print is on the page

Students' Strategies

- Reads from memory
- Reads from pictures vs. words
- Notices when a word doesn't match a picture
- Uses pictures as meaning cues
- Needs to practice reading before recalling
- Reads fluently
- Self-corrects (recognizes when he/she has read a word incorrectly)
- Has good use of context
- Has good (emergent) strategies; What kinds?
- Can read with expression
- Can get his/her mouth ready to read certain words
- Remembers/recognizes words seen before
- Uses beginning consonants/sounds as clues
- Has good decoding skills (can sound words out)

Students' Attitudes About Reading/Interest in Print

- Is motivated
- Is interested in stories/takes books and reads them
- Likes to read/loves stories
- Is comfortable with familiar stories
- Tells books/stories aloud
- Is willing to look at/pay attention to pictures
- Uses/treats books well

Students' Second Language Abilities

- Knows the alphabet in English/Spanish
- Gets confused between English and Spanish
- May be hindered in reading English by lack of vocabulary

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